



## Office of the Governor

March 6, 2006

Dear friends of the Bighorn Forest:

For a variety of reasons, revising the Bighorn National Forest Plan has been a long and grueling process. The Bighorn National Forest is treasured and prized by all who live, play and work within its boundaries. In important ways, the identity of these people and their sense of place are tied to the forest, and they have developed very passionate and long-held positions on its management.

I commend the Bighorn National Forest for diligently considering the concerns and interests of the public, county and state cooperators, as well as private and non-governmental entities amid complex and heated discourse. Does this plan fully meet every need? Most likely not. I believe, however, that the Forest Service is sincere in its offer to work with the public to fully implement the plan to the best of its ability while simultaneously committing to improve the forest plan as new information becomes available.

Updating the plan might well prove to be as challenging as developing it was in the first place. There will be differing opinions on the interpretation of new and conflicting science. I hope, though, that the Forest Service remains tenacious in working through these issues in a public and professional manner.

The Forest Service likely could have saved time had it taken this project on itself; instead, it chose to work collaboratively, incorporating the ideas of others. This commitment to collaboration has resulted in a better forest plan. Thank you for that effort.

Recognition also needs to be given to the county commissioners and conservation districts within Big Horn, Sheridan, Johnson and Washakie counties. Countless hours were spent poring over the details of this plan and working on solutions with the constituents in their communities. Their input throughout this process has been invaluable. They not only provided local perspective on issues, but also worked with the Forest Service and state agencies on very technical portions of the plan revision.

Finally, I would like to thank the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, State Forestry Division, State Trails Program, Department of Agriculture, Business Council, Department of Environmental Quality and Department of Transportation for being

involved in this revision process. Personnel in these agencies both in Cheyenne and on the ground committed many hours and resources toward this effort. Their commitment to this project is greatly appreciated.

While the revision process itself is over, much work remains. Our attention must now turn toward implementation. The Forest Service has expressed its commitment to working with stakeholders in the implementation of the revised plan. This continued cooperation is crucial to successful implementation. Planning is one thing; getting the work done on the ground is something else.

Although state agencies may not completely agree with all aspects of the plan, in the end, this document is one that we can support. The state looks forward to continuing to work with the public, local governments and the Forest Service in implementing the plan.

As Winston Churchill once said, "The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty." I hope that we can all adopt the mindset of the optimist over the coming years as we work together to implement the Bighorn National Forest Plan.

Best regards,

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